

Chapter 8: Comments and Coordination

A Notice of Intent was published in the *Federal Register* on March 11, 1999, to formally announce that FHWA is preparing an EIS for the Southern Corridor project. The notice included brief descriptions of the proposed action and coordination with a project steering committee.

8.1 Agency Coordination

8.1.1 Agency Scoping Meetings

April 6, 1999. A one-day partnering meeting was held on April 6, 1999, jointly with members of the Southern Corridor Committee (SCC) and key regulatory agencies interested in the project. The purposes of the meeting were to provide the attendees with an update on the project status and an understanding of the project's purpose and need, to review the corridor requirements, and to obtain the partners' input on identifying a detailed study corridor.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the following organizations and agencies:

- Alpha Engineering
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- City of Hurricane
- City of St. George
- Entranco
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Five County Association of Governments
- Intermountain Ecosystems
- Leucadia
- National Park Service—Zion National Park
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Rosenberg Associates
- State Institutional Trust Land Administration (SITLA)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
- Utah Department of Environmental Quality (UDEQ), Division of Water Quality
- Utah Department of Natural Resources (UDNR), Division of Wildlife Resources
- Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)
- Utah State Senate
- Washington City
- Washington City-Interchange
- Washington County
- Washington County Economic Development
- Washington County Water Conservancy District (WCWCD)
- Winding River

An update on the project status was provided along with an environmental process overview. The project schedule was discussed and the roles of UDOT, SCC, and the partners were determined. The purpose and need and related corridor requirements were discussed in detail, which involved addressing potential conflicts in preserving the function of the corridor. The attendees broke up into work groups to identify ideas for the preservation of the corridor. Afterward, preliminary geotechnical and environmental constraints were reviewed. The attendees again broke up into work groups to develop a detailed study corridor and study area, and alignments were finalized.

July 2, 2001. UDOT sponsored a meeting on July 2, 2001, with EPA and Envision Utah to provide an overview of smart growth initiatives with the local cities, developers, and resource agencies potentially affected by the Southern Corridor. Envision Utah provided a 30-minute presentation to the group about the Envision Utah process and some of the key planning initiatives that have been used along the Wasatch Front. EPA provided a presentation of its planning initiatives to the group. The presentation described ideas on land planning and smart growth that could be implemented to minimize environmental impacts and provide a better quality of life to residents in the region.

EPA and FHWA would like smart growth alternatives addressed in the cumulative and secondary impact section of the EIS. This section should look at different growth scenarios using a model that could analyze different land uses. The cities and developers were asked to provide land use plans showing smart growth initiatives so that smart growth could be analyzed in the EIS; however, the cities determined that they might not have enough time to develop the plans to meet the EIS schedule.

8.1.2 Southern Corridor Committee

The SCC was organized specifically for the Southern Corridor EIS to facilitate communication with the cities and counties. The SCC includes representatives of UDOT, City of St. George, City of Hurricane, Washington City, BLM, USFWS, local developers, FHWA, EPA, and the Five County Association of Governments.

The SCC discussed and reviewed topics such as purpose and need, alignment alternatives, project updates, data projections, commercial and residential planned development, access points, project developments, and cumulative impacts. Below is a list of dates when the SCC meetings were held. Meeting minutes are located in the Southern Corridor administrative record.

- December 16, 1998
- March 30, 1999
- July 28, 1999
- November 16, 1999
- April 27, 2000
- July 2, 2001
- August 6, 2001
- September 13, 2001
- October 23, 2001
- December 4, 2001
- February 5, 2002
- April 3, 2002
- June 4, 2002
- October 15, 2002

8.1.3 Continued Coordination

Numerous meetings were held throughout the preparation of this EIS to facilitate communications between the project team and local, state, and federal agencies. UDOT worked closely with COE, BLM, USFWS, EPA, FHWA, UDEQ, and UDNR staff to keep them informed of the project status and the issues and concerns being addressed by UDOT in response to the public and the agencies.

Numerous meetings were held with various divisions of UDEQ, UDNR, city and county planning personnel, BLM, WCWCD, USDA, Department of Community and Economic Development, and various recreation planning agencies.

8.1.3.1 Draft EIS Preparation

During the preparation of the Draft EIS, the purpose of the many meetings with state regulatory agencies, city, and county officials was twofold:

- To collect data for Chapter 3, Affected Environment, and Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, of this EIS
- To enhance the quality of the work being done by directly involving the agencies in issues such as purpose and need, water quality, air quality, noise, farmlands, floodplains, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, social and economic impacts, and hazardous waste

8.2 Public Involvement

The Southern Corridor EIS public involvement plan included several techniques to reach as many people as possible in the study area. As defined in Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for Action, the study area covers one county and three cities, thus including a very diverse group of individuals.

The principal techniques used were public meetings, presentations, mailers and newsletters, a project Web site, press releases to the news media, and public notices in newspapers. Various city, county, and nongovernmental organization meetings were held to inform officials and other concerned citizens of the project status, gather pertinent data for the impact study, and identify issues and concerns regarding the project.

8.2.1 Public Meetings

One public scoping meeting and one public information meeting were held to allow the public to comment on the Southern Corridor project. Both meetings were held as open houses, allowing interested citizens to talk directly with UDOT and project engineers. The open houses were set up in station format, which included a project orientation and comment station.

8.2.1.1 Public Scoping Meeting

May 4, 1999. An open-house-style public scoping meeting was held at the St. George City Council Chambers on May 4, 1999, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM. The meeting was an opportunity for the public to get preliminary information about the Southern Corridor project and to provide input. Displays concerning major issues identified to date, the project purpose and need, and the proposed project corridor along with environmental and geotechnical constraints identified to date were prepared for review and discussion by the public.

There were about 35 attendees at the meeting. Project team members facilitated the open house, answered questions, and provided additional information on the project and the environmental process. Comment forms were available for attendees to provide written comments.

Overall, the public scoping meeting was well received. Participants appreciated the opportunity to receive information on the project and to comment on relevant issues.

8.2.1.2 Public Information Meeting

September 13, 2001. A public meeting was held on September 13, 2001, at the Pioneer Center for the Arts (47 East 200 North, St. George). The meeting was held to update the public, since over 2 years had elapsed since the first meeting. It also allowed people to meet the new team, provide comments, see what comments had been received to date, and understand what categories would be researched for the EIS.

Meeting participants included representatives from HDR Engineering, Inc., Fehr & Peers, and UDOT Region 4, including project management. The register was signed by 73 people. About 80 people attended the meeting, with most attending from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM. The meeting remained open until 7:00 PM. Details about the comments received were documented in the *Draft Meeting Comment Report for Southern Corridor Project, October 2001*.

The following is the general format of the public scoping meetings:

- The public was encouraged, but not required, to sign in at the registration desk. A meeting overview, a project fact sheet, and comment cards were available there.
- Displays were available including maps and informational boards, and handout versions of all information on the boards were also available. The boards included purpose and need, categories that engineers would be looking at, a growth forecast for the area, a schedule board including the NEPA process and where the project was in the process, previous comments, typical sections, and various alignment boards. The maps were also available in an unmounted format at several stations to help diffuse crowding and encourage one-on-one communication. The 11×17-inch maps were the handouts most frequently picked up.
- Project engineers presented information about the project in an open-house format. No formal presentation was given.
- Comment cards were distributed so attendees could submit a written comment during the meeting, mail the comment to the address printed on the handout, or e-mail a comment.

Comments were accepted by the following methods:

- Comment form at the public meeting (6)
- E-mail (11)
- Mail (5)

The following methods were used to notify the public of the September 13, 2001, meeting:

- The first press release was sent out by HDR to local newspaper, television, and radio stations on August 1, 2001. Speaking points were prepared for UDOT.
- The second press release and “quick facts” were sent out by Myron Lee, UDOT Region 4 public involvement coordinator, to local newspaper, television, and radio stations on August 30, 2001. Again, speaking points were prepared for UDOT.
- One thousand flyers were distributed in the St. George Chamber of Commerce newsletter the week of August 20, 2001. Because the meeting location later had to be changed from the City Council Chambers to the Social Hall, the chamber sent out two e-mail letters about the meeting. Signs also were posted at the City Council Chambers alerting the public of the location change.
- Flyers were mailed to the Southern Corridor public mailing list, which includes 214 names, as well as to three additional citizens who requested information through the Web site.
- A Web site was posted to www.dot.state.ut.us/sc/ with detailed information regarding the Southern Corridor. Several people used the Web site to subscribe to the mailing list as well as to leave comments before and after the public open house. The Web site address was included on all materials including the press releases.
- On September 3, 2001, flyers were door-dropped at the trailer park and Chevron Station that would potentially be affected by the 4300 West alternative. Flyers also were dropped at all city buildings and libraries in the study area.
- The remainder of the 9,000 flyers were stuffed in bags at Albertson’s on Bluff Street and the Wal-Mart in Washington City. Many participants said they had heard about the meeting from the Wal-Mart flyers.
- A 3×7-inch advertisement was placed in the *St. George Spectrum* on Sunday, September 9, 2001, and September 12–13, 2001. Participants also noted that this method was effective.

8.2.2 Newsletters and Other Publications

Fact Sheet, Spring 1999. The fact sheet included a description of the project background, team, recent activities, and the future direction the project. The fact sheet was mailed to about 126 people.

8.2.3 Web Site

The Southern Corridor Web site, www.dot.state.ut.us/sc/, is referenced on the UDOT Region 4 home page and allows the public to view current Southern Corridor news. The Web site provides a variety of information including public meeting schedules and comments and maps of alternative highway alignments.

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